

12 SEP 1978


MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO for Strategic Programs
FROM: Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT: Soviet Strategic Forces Buildup

Attached is a newspaper column by Joseph C. Harsch. In it he builds his case on a statement in the London Economist that the Soviet missile buildup gained a lot of momentum from 1973 onward. I've had the general impression that the Soviet strategic forces program has been rather constant, rather than characterized by a surge in the period such as 1973. What is your view on this, please.


STANSFIELD TURNER

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Attachment



OPINION AND COMMENTARY *Yager*

Joseph C. Harsch

Moscow's motives

I do not know, nor do you, why the Soviet Union has been building up its armed forces steadily over a long period of time. There is much speculation on this subject and many an assertion based on assumptions. Some of them may be sound.

Many of the current assertions made in the United States of late assume that the motive is to catch up with and get ahead of the United States in military power in order to be able someday to overwhelm the United States.

There is probably something to this point of view. So far as I can determine it is a fact that Moscow increased its military spending immediately following the enormous humiliation of the Cuban missile crisis when its missiles were seen, and photographed, going back up the English Channel to Soviet home ports. What great power wouldn't give thought to building up its armed strength after a public humiliation of that magnitude? No surprise in that.

But there may be more to it than Moscow reaction to something Washington has done. Not everything other people do is aimed at the discomfiture of the United States. Americans sometimes overestimate their own central importance in the eyes, and plans, of other peoples.

In this connection (of what Moscow has been doing about weapons) my eye was caught by a statement in the current issue of the (London) Economist. The passage referred to "the massive Russian missile-building program which has been going on since 1973." "Since 1973." Why 1973? What happened to trigger a special upward jump in Soviet missile-building in that particular year? Did the Americans do something special in that year?

No. Not in 1973. The big event of that year was the surprise Egyptian launching of an offensive into lost Arab territories. But something did happen the year before, in 1972, which certainly did send shock waves through the whole Soviet Union. 1972 was the year when Richard Nixon shook up everyone by announcing that he was going to Peking, and did go.

The record of the buildup of armed forces along the frontier between China and the Soviet Union is particularly interesting. From 1963 to 1966 the Soviets maintained a routine force of 17 divisions along the Chinese frontier. The "Great Cultural Revolution" broke out in China in 1965 and totally absorbed Chinese energies for the next four years. The Soviets dropped their Chinese frontier garrison to 15 divisions.

But in 1968 the "Red Guards" began to beat up not only Chinese "reactionaries," but also Soviet diplomats, right in front of the Soviet Embassy. There were "border incidents."

In 1969 the Soviets pushed their forces on the Chinese frontier up to 21 divisions. And in that year occurred the startling "Ussuri River incident", in which a pitched battle was fought between Chinese and Soviet units of regimental strength. In 1970 the Soviets went on up to 30 divisions on the Chinese frontier, in 1972 on up to 44 divisions, and in 1973 to 45 divisions. That is where the figure has stood ever since.

So 1973 is the year when Moscow reached a level of land force deployment along its frontier with China which is greater than its deployment in Eastern Europe facing the forces of the NATO alliance. And 1973 is also the year in which the Soviets increased the rate of nuclear missile-building.

The Chinese had their first successful nuclear weapons test in 1964. But the Cultural Revolution the following year took them out of play so far as foreign affairs was concerned. Besides, the United States plunged into the Vietnam war in full strength in March of 1965 — and stayed in that condition until 1972. So

al problems, nor the United States with its Vietnam preoccupation, was of any serious concern to Moscow. Both were "out of play."

All of that had changed abruptly by the end of 1972. The United States was out of Vietnam and once again able to think about such other places as Europe and the Middle East. China was freed by the Nixon visit of fear of the United States. It could concentrate its attentions on the Soviets along its inland frontier. And by that time the Chinese nuclear program had progressed to the stage of intermediate-range missiles which could reach several important Soviet cities.

So 1973 was the first year in which Moscow had to worry about both its eastern and western flanks and reckon on the possibility of being decisively outclassed in military power by the potential combination of the military forces of the United States, Western Europe, Iran in the Middle East, and China in Asia.

That is a formidable potential combination for Moscow to face. It would hopelessly outclass what Moscow has today and could ever hope to build. Could that be part of the reason for the almost frantic buildup of Soviet weapons since 1973?

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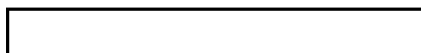
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MEMORANDUM FOR:



FROM:

Director of Central Intelligence

1. I had an interesting and useful talk with Lt. General Gard, President of the National Defense University. I told him that I had been thinking for some time about whether there was any way I could accommodate his desire for my lecturing at his university with my reservations about participating in this kind of program. He assured me that he had drastically cut down the number of lectures and was going to do so more. I told him that I had been thinking in terms of lecturing to his students after they had done a homework assignment. One objective would be to have covered the fundamentals by reading and primarily get into an interchange of questions and answers that would bring out the fine points.

2. I told him I'd ask you to see if we could work up a package of 20, 30 or 50 pages in length which could be given to the students well in advance of my lecturing and assigned as homework for that lecture. I would have in mind some of the following:

a. An abbreviated version (or version with paragraphs marked) of the Executive Order.

b. The pink and blue wiring diagram plus some of Herb's excellent unclassified graphics about the community.

c. A couple of pieces on secrecy in our society, perhaps our article and something on the other side of the fence.

d. Something that discusses the usefulness of the different methods of collecting intelligence today--perhaps excerpts from my speeches.

e. Something on the analytic function--again perhaps excerpts from my speeches.

3. I'm reluctant to rely too much on speeches. Perhaps we should also check the literature in Kirkpatrick's book, Ray Cline's book, and others to see if we could take chapters from them. This would be like my lecture at the Naval War College a few months before I became President when I sent up homework and then lectured for ten minutes, followed by my interrogation of the students on the homework.


STANSFIELD TURNER

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